

Burdette G. Johnson

Burdette G. Johnson was born in DeSoto, Missouri on January 2, 1885. He had read Lardner's History of the World by the age of 10 and was fascinated by the lives of kings, emperors, dukes, barons, counts, etc. His family moved to St. Louis when he was 12. The St. Louis Stamp & Coin Company was opened in 1898 by Frank E. Ellis at 1003 Pine St. St. Louis and by 1903 had moved to 115 N. 11th St.

Johnson went to work at St. Louis Stamp & Coin about 1904. Johnson and his cousin , David A. Sullivan of Indianapolis, purchased the business from Ellis on August 19, 1907 and became partners, with Johnson managing the business and Sullivan supplying some capital. On September 21, 1908 Johnson bought out Sullivan's share. The firm had begun advertising in The Numismatist in 1902 and continued to do so until 1910. It conducted auctions and put out buying price lists. Johnson soon started to go to Europe each year to buy coins. The business moved to the 5th floor at 408 Olive St. about 1924. Johnson's knowledge of coins of all areas and all periods was phenomenal. He virtually became a wholesaler of coins, selling primarily to dealers. He was selected to appraise the Virgil Brand collection and was commissioned to sell the Armin Brand portion of it. He bought most of the E.H.R. Green collection with Eric P. Newman who had become his friend and whom Johnson encouraged to study numismatics and to use Johnson's library. Johnson used to visit B. Max Mehl each year to buy coins which Mehl's advertising brought in. Johnson's opinions as to rarity, genuineness, and provenance were often sought after. After a long career he died on February 2, 1947 and the June 1947 Numismatist carries his obituary.